

FINDINGS: The Democratic People's Republic of North Korea (DPRK or North Korea) is one of the world's most repressive regimes. Severe religious freedom abuses occur regularly, including: surveillance, discrimination, and harassment of both authorized and unauthorized religious activity; the arrest, torture, and possible execution of those conducting clandestine religious activity; and the mistreatment and imprisonment of asylum-seekers repatriated from China, particularly those suspected of engaging in religious activities or having religious affiliations.

Based on these violations, USCIRF again recommends in 2010 that North Korea be designated as a "country of particular concern," or CPC. The State Department has designated North Korea as a CPC since 2001.

The North Korean government continues to have a deplorable human rights and religious freedom record. Dissent is not tolerated and few legal or political protections exist for universally recognized rights. The government controls most aspects of daily life, including religious activity, which is allowed only in government-operated religious "federations" or a small number of government-approved "house churches." Other public and private religious activity is prohibited. Anyone discovered engaging in clandestine religious activity is subject to discrimination, arrest, arbitrary detention, disappearance, torture, and public execution. A large number of religious believers are incarcerated in *kwan-li-so* (North Korea's infamous penal labor camps), though the exact number is difficult to verify given the government's control over information. The situation for North Korean refugees remains acute. Asylum-seekers repatriated from China are interrogated about their religious belief and affiliations, and those suspected of distributing religious literature or having ongoing connections with South Korean religious groups are mistreated and imprisoned as security threats. Testimony from former North Korean refugees indicates that clandestine religious activity in North Korea is increasing, as are the government's attempts to halt its spread. In recent years, police and security agency offices have infiltrated Protestant churches in China, started training police and soldiers about the dangers of religion, and set up fake prayer meetings to catch worshippers. There was one reported case of a public execution in the past year. A woman was executed for distributing Bibles and her entire family was sent to prison.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS: U.S. officials have publicly supported the inclusion of human rights concerns within the structure of the Six-Party Talks on nuclear non-proliferation on the Korean peninsula, but these issues have been sidelined until North Korea agrees to verification of denuclearization. USCIRF believes that negotiations with North Korea will not succeed unless rooted in a broader security framework that includes agreements on humanitarian and human rights concerns. USCIRF urges the administration to work with regional allies at the Six-Party Talks to raise human rights concerns, including religious freedom, and link future economic, political, and diplomatic assistance to progress in these areas. The Commission also continues to recommend that the U.S. government implement fully the North Korea Human Rights Act of 2008, including its provisions to support NGOs working to build democracy and protect human rights in North Korea and to create a security cooperation regime in northeast Asia similar to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Additional recommendations for U.S. policy toward North Korea can be found in the 2010 Annual Report chapter on North Korea and by following this link:

<http://www.uscifr.gov/images/ar2010/northkorea2010.pdf>